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CHANGES IN LIFE GOALS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO PERSONALITY AND COLLEGE ENVIRONMENTS.

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Changes in the rated importance of five student life goals were compared with (1) student personality orientations and college environmental press factors, and (2) congruent interactions between college environment and student personality characteristics. At three diverse colleges (identified as intellectual, social, and enterprising), entering freshmen completed the American College Survey in the fall of 1964. The same students filled out a parallel form the following spring (1965). Rated importance of life goals in public affairs, religion, reading, science, and family (on a four-point scale) served as the criteria of change. Despite methodological limitations and differences in percentages of the spring survey completion, appropriate statistical analysis supports the following conclusions. For most life goal areas, changes in college students were only slightly due to either college press or personality factors. However, when college press and personality orientation are mutually supportive, the students changed in the expected directions. Students development was viewed as a product of personality orientation and concurrent external conditions allowing change and development in a direction congruent with personality orientation. (WR)

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Changes in Life Goals of College Students and their Relationships to Personality and College Environments.[1]

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The impacts of college on student changes in values and attitudes has been small according to most research findings. Although we support the principle that students change because of college, we discover that the research findings are less promising. Several reasons for this apparant inconsistency can be found. One plausible reason may be that few studies have combined both personality and environmental factors as predictors of change within the same design. In many studies the entering freshmen class is studied as one homogeneous group, and thus individual differences within a class are ignored. Others have used various statistical techniques to control for student differences. In either situation, the interaction of the student with his collegiate environment has not been examined.

Another plausible reason for the unimpressive research findings may be the nature of the dependent variable or the output criterion. In many studies change is examined on personality variables. It may be that a college freshman cannot or does not wish to change his basic personality structure as he progresses through college. Criterion variables which are less inclusive although probably less crucial and exciting, but more related to potential college impact, may be more appropriate variables for study.

The purpose of this study was to relate changes in rated importance of life goals with personality and environmental factors and congruent interactions between college environments and personality characteristics of students. In this study the environment, long recognized as important by numerous psychologists and educators, was examined. (McConnell and Heist, 1962; Newcomb, 1962; Holland, 1966)

Three major questions were asked in this tudy: Are changes in rated importance of life goals consistent with 1) type of college environmental press? 2) personality orientation of students? and 3) congruent combinations of college and personality factors?

It was hypothesized that students would change their values and goals in a direction consistent with the dominant environmental press on campus. Entering students would perceive what was regarded as important on a given campus and would also be reinforced for adopting the goals that were espoused by the campus community. It was also hypothesized that all students would not change in identical ways during college. The reactions to a given environment would be contingent upon a student's own personality orientation. A student would be more predisposed to change his value structure if the change was consistent with his own personality. Lastly students who find themselves in an environment which is consistent with their personality orientation and with a specific life goal (Congruent group) would change more in the expected direction than students whose own personality orientation and college environmental press are consistent with each other but their orientations are incongruent with the given life goal under study (Incongruent group).

Method

Three diverse colleges were selected for study. Each college represented a different type of institution as defined by the Environmental Assessment Technique (Astin and Holland, 1961). The first college was designated as an Intellectual college. The college emphasized scholarship and esteemed abstract and creative abilities. The second college was characterized as having a dominant Social

Social press. The college community valued interpersonal relationships and concern for people, but placed less emphasis on scientific inquiry and academic activities. The third institution was classified as having a dominant Enterprising environmental press. At this college, the salient theme centered on the ability to communicate to and persuade others. The emphasis was more of working over others than working with other persons.

Male students at these three institutions were selected for study. Entering freshmen at each college completed the American College Survey (1964) in the fall of 1964. The following spring the same students filled out a parallel form (1965). Ninety-two percent of the original sample of entering freshmen from the Intellectual college, eight-five percent from the Social college, and fifty-five percent from the Enterprising college completed the spring survey.

Changes in importance on five life goals during the freshmen year were utilized as the criteria of change. The life goals, included in both surveys, related to areas of public affairs, religion, reading, science, and family. Students indicated their importance given to each goal on a four point scale -- no or little, some, very much, and essential importance.

The analyses were simplified since it was not feasible to analyze the data in a 3 X 3 X 2 design with an unequal number of students in each cell. Thus for each life goal eight groups were chosen to make a 2 X 2 X 2 design with College, Personality, and Self Esteem as the three factors. The same eight groups were not used for every goal. The selection of the groups was contingent

upon the relationship between the categories of each factor and the life goal. Table 1 presents the groups utilized for each of the life goals.

Table 1

A second methodological problem in this study, which focused on the assessment of change, was the control of initial importance given to each life goal. The amount and direction of change over the first year of college was expected to be correlated with initial importance. Students who had originally indicated no importance of a goal would change in different ways from students who had placed considerable importance on a goal when they first entered college. The effect of a college environment or a dominant personality orientation may differ according to initial importance. Thus when change would be related to some other variable, the observed relationship would partially be a function of ceiling and floor effects and a misinterpretation of the relationships would likely follow. Since only four alternatives of importance were provided in the scale it was not feasible to correct for initial importance by the analysis of covariance or some other elequant statistical procedure. Consequently, the analysis of change in rated importance of each goal was performed separately for students in each of three levels defined by their responses to each goal question at entry into college. The three levels corresponded to "no importance", "some or very much importance", and "essential importance". Despite these differences in direction of change from level to level, it was still possible to make similar types of predictions for differences between the changes

of the groups classified by college and personality at all three levels. When the groups were subdivided by their initial responses, some groups became too small for the statistical analyses.

A third methodological problem was the fact that the design included an unequal and unproportional number of students in each group. In the 2 X 2 X 2 design, each cell mean was regarded as the best estimate of the population value regardless of size of the subgroup. Thus in testing the various interactions and main effects contrasts the coefficients were always one. However, when combining subgroups after a nonsignificant interaction, the combined mean was obtained by weighting the previous means by their corresponding sample size.

Results

Guidelines were established to clarify the results and to highlight salient findings. Such guidelines, based on the consistency with which certain findings were obtained, enabled attention to be focused on a few comparisons in the multiplicity of the factors and their combinations. If significant differences between groups for the factors (College, Personality, and Congruency) were obtained for two of the three comparisons in the study of a life goal, the relationship between change of the life goal and the factor was considered important. If one of the three comparisons was significant and the other two in the expected direction, a tendency was observed. If the results were only analyzed at two levels of importance, a difference was observed if both comparisons were significant. A tendency was observed if one comparison was significant and the other was in the expected direction. Table 2

presents a summary of the results.

College Effect. The life goals were not uniformly related to the college effect; one appeared to be more sensitive than the others. The college community appeared related only to the religion life goal. Students at the Social college increased or retained their initial importance of a system of religious beliefs to a greater extent than students at the Intellectual college. The expectation that Social college students would also show different changes than Enterprising was not confirmed by the data. Students at the Enterprising college did not continue to regard the goal in civic and public affairs areas more than students enrolled at a college whose student body was dominantly Social or Intellectual. The Intellectual college community did not significantly reward changes toward increased importance on the goal related to science achievement more than the Social community. No significant findings were obtained for the goals related to marriage and to reading. In summary, with the exception of the religion goal, there did not appear to be differences among the college in their effect on students' life goals.

Personality Effect. The results gave qualified support to the hypothesis that students changed their importance on life goals in a direction consistent with their dominant personality orientation. Following the guidelines established some tendencies were observed. Students with Intellectual personality orientations tended to increase or retained to a greater extent than Social students the importance they gave to scientific achievement. Students who selected a major classified as a Social one tended to increase or retain to a greater

extent than Intellectual or Enterprising students the importance given to adherence to a system of religious beliefs. There was also a tendency for Enterprising students to increase or retain to a greater extent than Intellectual students the importance given to leadership in civic affairs. The results for the goals related to marriage and reading did not confirm the hypotheses formulated for these goals; personality was unrelated to changes in these goals.

Two additional aspects of personality were explored in this investigation. No support was found for the notion that Social or Intellectual self esteem was related in any way to changes of importance of the life goals, and similarity of students' importance of the life goal with the college community's importance was not related to differential student changes. In summary, some types of students tended to change the importance they placed on some of the goals to a greater extent than other types of students. Personality appeared to have an influence.

Congruency Effect. The combination of personality and environmental factors had a greater impact on student changes in the importance they gave to life goals than did either factor used by itself. Social students at a Social college significantly increased or retained their initial importance of the goal related to an religious code more than Intellectual students at an Intellectual college. The results suggested that the Social students at a Social college also changed differently from Enterprising students at an Enterprising college. There was an indication that Intellectual students at an Intellectual college increased or retained their

initial importance on the goal related to science achievement more than Social students at a Social college. The results suggested that Social students in a college community parallel with their initial importance on marriage and family more than Intellectual students at an Intellectual college. No consistent differences were obtained for the goals related to leadership in public affairs and reading. In summary, for many areas of change studied, there was a college and a personality effect on student changes when both occurred together and mutually reinforced each other. There was a tendency that Intellectual students at an Intellectual college increased or retained their initial importance on the goal related to science achievement more than Social students at a Social college. The results suggested that Social students in a college community parallel with their dominant personality orientation also increased or retained their initial importance on marriage and family more than Intellectual students at an Intellectual college. No consistent differences were obtained for the goals related to leadership in public affairs and reading.

Discussion

The most parsimonious conclusion based on these results is that for most areas of life goals, changes in college students are only slightly due to college effects or personality effects, when each set of effects is considered by itself. However, when they are in combination and supportive of each other, the students change in directions expected on the basis of both the college press and the personality orientation. Changes of students can be viewed as a product of a student's personality orientation and the joint occurrence

of external conditions which allow him to change and develop in a direction congruent with his personality orientation.

If changes are to be considered a product of the interaction of the student and his environment rather than a function of either the student or his environment, several implications can be drawn. If a college were interested in maximizing its effects, it would then select freshmen whose personality predispositions are congruent with the goals of the college and the campus climate. Changes of this type involve depth rather than kind.

It may be more profitable to view the problem of change as one in which we can recognize that a given environment will not and possibly should not influence all students in identical ways. In our research we can discover what changes are occurring for what students under what conditions, and then emphasize to the college officials that they should decide which goals should be esteemed and emphasized. The quality of change is as important for the student as the direction or extent of change. Do we wish a student to become more inner-directed in his value system than outer-directed? Change through awareness is qualitatively different from change through conformity.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this investigation was an exploratory rather than a definitive experimental study. Although the design included the study of several factors and their interactions, the measures utilized were somewhat general. The only criteria for this study were life goals, and the range for change included only four alternatives. The content of some of the goal items may not have been sensitive enough to isolate differential

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college or personality effects. Both the personality and college environmental estimates were global and indirect to some extent. With more sensitive scales and measures, it may have been possible to detect stronger effects of personality and college. However, the results of this study do suggest that a simultaneous examination of both personality and environmental factors is a productive approach to the study of changes of students. It recognizes the complexity of problems associated with such broad issues in education.

Changes in Life Goals of College Students

Table 1

Subgroups Selected for the Study of Each Life Goal

Life Goal	Subgroups
Being influential in public affairs.	Ent. and Social College Ent. and Social Personality High and Low Social Self Esteem
Being influential in public affairs.	Ent. and Int. College Ent. and Int. Personality High and Low Social Self Esteem
Following a formal religious code.	Social and Int. College Social and Int. Personality High and Low Social Self Esteem
Following a formal religious code.	Social and Ent. College Social and Ent. Personality High and Low Social Self Esteem
Being well read.	Int. and Social College Int. and Social Personality High and Low Int. Self Esteem
Being a good husband or wife.	Social and Int. College Social and Int. Personality High and Low Social Self Esteem
Making a theoretical contribution to science.	Int. and Social College Int. and Social Personality High and Low Intellectual Esteem

Table 2

F Test Results by Level of Importance of the College, Personality, and Congruency Effects for each of the Life Goals

Life Goal	Comparisons[1]	Level[2]	Main Effects[3] College	Personality	Congruenc
Science	Int. & Social	1	.79	2.39*	2.41*
		2	.27	1.41	.95
Religion	Social & Int.	1	C x P x S = 6.82*		
		2	2.85*	.21	2.04*
	(Hi Esteem)	3	2.33*	.74	1.81*
	(Lo Esteem)	3	-1.63	.74	-1.58
Religion	Social & Ent.	1	1.71*	1.23	1.94*
		2	-.70	1.93*	.88
		3	.67	1.32	1.02
Public Affairs	Ent. & Int.	1	.26	.22	.17
		2	-2.69	.46	-.70
		3	-1.62	2.37*	-.41
Public Affairs	Ent. & Soc.	1	C x P x S = 7.43*		
		2	-1.44	-.72	-1.21
Marriage Partner	Social & Int.	2	.84	.95	1.01
		3	1.37	1.39	1.94*
Well Read	Int. & Social				
	(Hi Esteem)	2	-.28	.39	.20
	(Lo Esteem)	2	2.55*	.39	2.21*
		3	1.16	-1.97	1.21

[1]Comparisons refer to the two categories selected for the College and Perso Factors. Self Esteem was the third Factor.

[2]Level 1 refers to no initial importance; Level 2 refers to some or very muc importance; Level 3 refers to essential importance.

[3]For the College and Personality effects contrasts between the groups list under "Comparisons" were tested. For the Congruency effects, contrasts between groups classified similarly on both the College and Personality Factors were obtained and tested for statistical significance.

*The "+" sign indicates that the mean difference was in the predicted dire Significance was determined by referring to the upper .05 level of the t dist tion.

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